Eight killed in Kohat landslide

By Our Correspondent

KOHAT: A landslide buried eight people in the Parshai area of Gumbat tehsil here on Wednesday, rescue officials said.

Rescue 1122 spokesman Jawad Afridi said rescuers recovered eight bodies from the debris and shifted them to hospital.

The area where the incident occurred is located near the Indus River and the deceased were searching for placer gold at the time of the landslide.

They were identified as Faizan, a Frontier Constabulary employee, Fayyaz, Danial, Faraz, Talat, Abid, Riaz Ali Khan and Sabir.

The bodies were shifted to a local hospital.

Three injured in Bannu ambulance attack

BANNU: Three people were injured when unidentified assailants opened fire on a private ambulance transporting a patient to Islamabad here on Wednesday.

The incident occurred at Sperka Chowk in Domel, where armed men already present at the spot signalled an ambulance to stop. When the driver did not stop the vehicle, the assailants opened fire. As a result, three people accompanying the patient were injured. The vehicle was also damaged. The patient and the driver, however, remained unhurt.

The injured were identified as Mazhar Hussain, a resident of Jhang, Punjab, Shakir Ali, a resident of Karak (currently residing in Islamabad) and Sheeraz, a resident of Pakpattan, Punjab. All three are employees of a private care centre in Islamabad.

According to the police report lodged by one of the injured, Mazhar Hussain, they were transporting a patient, Rehmat, resident of Mitakhel Bannu, to Islamabad for treatment. Upon reaching Sperka Chowk, armed individuals attempted to stop the ambulance and then opened unprovoked fire.

Meanwhile, unknown miscreants carried out a hand grenade attack on a sentry point of Bannu Central Jail here on Wednesday. However, no loss of life or damage to property was reported. The attackers targeted the sentry point located at the corner of the jail on the side of Khalifa Gul Nawaz Hospital.

The hand grenade struck the wall and bounced back onto the road, where it exploded with a bang.

The jail superintendent said that the facility was also targeted in a sniper attack, but due to effective security arrangements, no casualties occurred and all personnel remained safe.

Sources said the jail had already received threat alerts regarding possible attacks. In view of these threats, jail authorities had been conducting regular night patrols.

In another incident, unknown assailants shot dead a veterinary doctor near a mosque adjacent to Tarang graveyard.

The deceased was identified as Arslan, 35, a resident of Hinjal Ameer Khan. The city police shifted the body to hospital for postmortem, and initiated an investigation into the incident. — Correspondent

Dera police foil bid to smuggle arms

By Muhammad Irfan Mughal

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Police on Wednesday claimed to have foiled an attempt to smuggle a large consignment of arms and ammunition from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Balochistan, arrested a suspect and seized weapons concealed in a double-cabin pickup.

According to the district police officer (DPO), Sajjad Ahmed Sahibzada, the operation was carried out by the suburban circle police following intelligence reports about the presence of a heavy cache of arms hidden in a vehicle.

Acting on the tip-off, police set up a checkpoint on the Dera–Bannu Road and intercepted a silver-coloured double-cabin pickup bearing registration number RE-314, which was travelling from Peshawar towards Dera Ismail Khan.

During a thorough search of the vehicle, police recovered a large quantity of arms and ammunition from its secret compartments. The seized weapons included three submachine guns (SMGs), 39 pistols of 30 bore, five Mauser-type 30 bore pistols, two M4 rifles, four 9mm pistols, 340 SMG magazines and 16,430 rounds of ammunition of various calibres.

The suspect, identified as Hamidullah, son of Khan Faqir, a resident of Mardan district, was taken into custody, while the vehicle along with the recovered arms was seized. Briefing the media at the Ijaz Shaheed Police Lines, the DPO stated that the recovered arms were worth millions of rupees and were being smuggled to Balochistan.

PROTEST: A grand protest was held in Parova on Wednesday against prolonged delays in development projects and the lack of basic civic facilities, with a large number of local residents participating to press for immediate government action.

The protesters highlighted several long-standing issues including delays in the construction of the Indus Highway, closure of the Parova Sports Stadium, shortage of teaching and administrative staff at Proa Degree College, establishment of a women's degree college and the closure of the Habib Bank Proa branch.

The demonstration was led by local leaders Farooq Parova, Aizaz Baloch and others, while representatives of various political parties at the local level also joined the protest. Participants carried placards and banners demanding restoration of public facilities and early completion of development schemes.

KP Assembly mandated to look into affairs of any institution: speaker

Lawmakers discuss law and order situation in province

By Umer Farooq

PESHAWAR: Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati on Wednesday declared that the Constitution mandated the assembly to look into affairs of any institution performing duties in a province, whether federal or provincial, military or otherwise.

"Whatever we [assembly] did was done in accordance with the law," the speaker told the assembly while referring to a letter to Peshawar's Corps Commander for a briefing to the house special committee on security on the security operations being carried out against militants in the province.

He insisted that the house worked within the framework of the Constitution and wasn't associated with any institution that overrode the Constitution.

Mr Swati said if the corps commander agreed, he would seek his institution's opinion on law and order.

He said the assembly believed that the corps commander should brief the house's special committee on security.

The speaker said the country saw multiple martial laws but since the Constitution was currently in place, things would run according to it.

He said that once the committee was briefed on law and order, it would submit its recommendations to the house and share them with the provincial and federal governments to decide the future course of action.

During the ongoing debate on the law and order situation in the province, treasury MPA Malik Adeel Iqbal complained that the federal government didn't bother to consider the discussions and recommendations from the peace jirga held at the KP Assembly.

He said that KP and Balochistan were on the frontline in the war against militancy.

"The federal government accuses our government of supporting militancy in the province, but if we look at the poor law and order situation in Balochistan, I question if the PTI rules that province as well," he said.

The treasury member said on one hand, the federal government's representatives held negotiations with the Afghan Taliban in Qatar over cross-border terrorism but on the other, when the KP government favoured peace talks with militants in the province, the Centre declared it a militant supporter.

He complained that the infrastructure, destroyed in the province during the past military operations, had yet to be rebuilt.

Opposition ANP's member Mohammad Nisar said that the rulers never realised the socio-economic misery of KP residents.

He said that development projects were important but such projects were of no value if public life and property weren't safe.

Mr Nisar complained about the capital flight from KP to other provinces and said over 3,500 industrial units stood closed in the province.

He said that despite the launch of military operation five months ago, target killings continued.

The lawmaker wondered what steps were taken on recommendation of the peace jirga held at the KP Assembly.

He suggested that the chief minister hand over the "street movement" to his party PTI and focus on the resolution of the issues facing the province in coordination with the federal government.

During the question hour, member of the opposition PPP Ahmad Karim Kundi said the province's cultivated land had shrunk and the seeds provided to farmers for germination expired. He said that KP was the only wheat-deficit federating unit, and that the issue required to be discussed in the house.

The lawmaker requested the chair to refer his question to the relevant house committee for discussion and recommendations.

The chair said that the relevant committee had already taken notice of the issue, so Mr Kundi should attend the meeting on special invitation.

The house also unanimously passed a resolution, moved by Mr Kundi,which said that the Constitution grants local governments financial and administrative powers but that empowerment hasn't happened yet.

"The provincial assembly recommends to the National Assembly and Senate to make amendments in Article 140(a) of the Constitution and to explain tenure and basic responsibilities of the local governments, should hold, local government polls mandatory within 90 days of the expiry of the local governments or if the government was dissolved, holding mandatory the local government representatives' sitting within 21 days of the poll results, empower local governments politically, administratively and financially," it read.

The resolution also demanded the inclusion of a chapter on local governments in the Constitution, ensuring LGs are empowered and remain free from influence of provincial authorities.

The chair later adjourned the sitting until Jan 19.

AN American hunter with his trophy of Kashmir Markhor having 52-inch horn in Tushi Shasha conservancy on Garam Chashma Road, Lower Chitral, on Wednesday. The hunter, who didn't want to be named, obtained an exportable permit for US$270,000 from the wildlife department. — Photo by Zahiruddin

Country faces greater threats from within, warns Siraj

By Our Correspondent

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami former chief Sirajul Haq on Wednesday said that no power in the world could defeat Pakistan, but warned that the country faced greater threats from within than from outside.

Addressing a ceremony at a seminary in Lal Qila area, he said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan were "burning" and that enough blood had already been shed in both provinces. "This cycle must end," he said, linking the prevailing unrest to unemployment and insecurity.

Mr Haq claimed that the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that even highly educated individuals were being driven to extremism.

He called on the federal and provincial governments, along with the establishment, to sit together and pull the country out of its multiple crises.

He urged Chief Minister Sohail Afridi to prioritise peace and development within the province instead of undertaking frequent visits to Punjab and Karachi, saying the chief minister represented not just his party but around 40 million people of the province.

Stressing the need for local ownership in restoring peace, Mr Haq said lasting stability could not be achieved without taking local communities into confidence.

He suggested the recruitment of at least 50,000 personnel into the police to improve law and order.

The former JI chief warned that political instability was fuelling insecurity and hampering development, and called on the federal and provincial governments to resolve their differences to ensure political stability, without which peace and progress were impossible.

Referring to international affairs, Mr Haq criticised US President Donald Trump, accusing him of arrogance and aggression against weaker countries, and said such policies would ultimately meet a downfall.

He alleged that the US maintained its forces in Gulf countries and that several Arab states relied on American troops for their security.

Confidential report about ban on PTM presented in high court

PHC fixes Jan 21 for next hearing of Manzoor Pashteen's plea

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court on Wednesday received a confidential report from the federal government regarding placing ban on Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) and several of its leaders including its chief Manzoor Ahmad Pashteen.

The additional attorney general, Sanaullah, provided a sealed report to a bench consisting of Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Dr Khurshid Iqbal. He said that the report included sensitive information and was for the perusal of court.

The bench fixed Jan 21 for next hearing of the matter, pronouncing to adjourn it as hearing over it would take some time.

The bench was hearing a petition jointly filed by Manzoor Pashteen and nine others, requesting the court to declare illegal the ban on PTM under Section 11B of Anti-Terrorism Act and the petitioners under Section 11-EE.

The petitioners have sought court's orders for federal government to remove PTM from the list of banned outfits in First Schedule of ATA and their names from the ATA's Fourth Schedule.

They also requested the court to declare that sections 11-B and 11-EE, amended through Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2014, were in conflict with Article 10-A of the Constitution that guaranteed the right to fair trial and due process of law.

The petitioners have sought orders for Section 11-D of the law, which deals with keeping of an organisation under observation, to be read as a mandatory precursor to proscription under Section 11-B.

Respondents in the petition include federal government through interior secretary, provincial government through its chief secretary, inspector general of police, additional chief secretary (home and tribal affairs), and Peshawar's chief capital city police officer.

The counsel for petitioners, Attaullah Kundi, said that PTM was a civil and non-violent social movement that had been advocating for the rights of Pakhtuns since its formation in 2014.

He said that unlike violent or militant movements in the region, PTM had drawn inspiration from advocate of non-violence Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and consistently stood against violence.

The counsel said that PTM organised Pashtun National Jirga from Oct 11 to Oct 13, 2024, in Khyber tribal district to provide a platform to Pakhtuns to demand 'justice and accountability'.

He said that to the utter shock of his clients, federal government issued the impugned notification on Oct 6, 2024, to ban PTM, while the petitioners and several other leaders of the organisation were 'proscribed' under Section 11-EE with their names placed in Fourth Schedule of ATA.

He contended that federal government had banned PTM, claiming that federal cabinet had approved it, but it neither made the cabinet's decision public nor it shared the grounds for ban with his clients.

The lawyer argued that a 2014 amendment to ATA empowered government to ban an organisation on ex parte basis without providing an opportunity of hearing to it, but that provision was unconstitutional and against the principle of natural justice.

Last year the court had sought the minutes of the federal cabinet meeting that decided to ban PTM. That bench had observed that if those minutes were sensitive in nature, the same should be produced in a sealed envelope and that those would not be disclosed to anyone.

The AAG said that they submitted a confidential report in sealed envelope, which was only for the perusal of court.

The petitioners' counsel stated that from the very beginning, they had been demanding that they should be informed about the grounds for proscription of the organisation, but the government had not been giving them any information in that regard.

CM visits Tank, pays tribute to martyred police personnel

Says all issues faced by police will be resolved at the earliest

By Our Correspondent

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi visited the Police Lines in Tank on Wednesday, paid tribute to police personnel, who were martyred in a recent terrorist attack and expressed solidarity with their families.

He laid wreaths at the Martyrs' Memorial, offered a salute and prayed for the fallen officers.

The chief minister also met with local elders and the families of the martyred police personnel, offering condolences and assuring them of the provincial government's continued support.

The visit came two days after a terrorist attack targeted an armoured vehicle of Gomal police station in Tank, resulting in the martyrdom of six police officials, including the station house officer.

The chief minister expressed deep grief over the incident and extended sympathies to the bereaved families.

Addressing local elders and the heirs of the martyred police personnel, Mr Afridi said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police were fighting bravely on the frontline against terrorism and that all issues faced by the police force would be resolved at the earliest.

"Death is inevitable, but attaining martyrdom for the greater cause of the nation and the homeland is the highest honour," he said.

The chief minister added that in the fight against terrorism, the counter-terrorism department, Special Branch, police, security forces, and the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had made immense sacrifices.

He said that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had rendered unparalleled sacrifices for peace in the country, and that the entire nation had stood united during difficult times.

Mr Afridi said that the world was aware that the anti-terror war was not of Pakistan's choosing but the one imposed on it.

He noted that for the past two decades, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had continuously borne the brunt of terrorism.

"More than 80,000 people of the province, including police and security personnel, have rendered their lives for peace in the country," he said.

The chief minister said the provincial government would continue to provide full support to the families of police martyrs.

He expressed confidence that lasting peace would be restored in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa soon.

JOURNALISTS BARRED: Journalists in Tank complained about restrictions imposed on media coverage for the chief minister's visit.

They insisted that a "complete media blackout" was enforced during the visit.

Sources outside the police lines claimed that officials of the Special Branch informed journalists that the restrictions were slapped on the instructions of senior police officials and not because of any immediate security threat.

They also said that a directive attributed to the regional police officer was conveyed to the personnel for denying journalists entry to the premises "under all circumstances". Journalists noted that they wanted to put questions to the chief minister regarding security challenges, governance issues and the protection of law-enforcement officials.